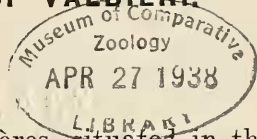


SESTRIERES, CLAVIERES AND BATHS OF VALDIERI.

(Plate I.)

13,820

By H. G. HARRIS, M.D.



On 25th July 1937 I started to collect at Sestrières, situated in the Cottian Alps Piedmont, accompanied by my son, Mr J. H. Harris, who is responsible for the photographs and was also instrumental in taking such swift flying insects as *Colias palaeno* and numerous others.

Sestrières, which is 6500 ft. above sea-level, is reached by motor 'bus from Oulx, and the journey is just 24 hours from London. We stayed at the "Albergo Duchi d'Aosta," one of the two tower-shaped hotels which are peculiar to the district. It was my second visit, having stopped there in 1934.

The first mention I can find of Sestrières is that by Dr Verity, *E.R.*, Vol. XXXVIII, where he describes it as "a barren pass covered by a peat bog swept by winds or wrapped in clouds alternately, so that species are scarce and confined to little gullies where they seek shelter." I was lucky, therefore, on my two visits in 1934 and 1937 to find weather conditions very different on the whole from those described by Dr Verity.

In 1934 butterflies were swarming, but in 1937—what a difference—the weather was good and I was assured that the summer had been an excellent one, so it was difficult to account for the paucity of species, but most entomologists had the same tale to tell whether at home or abroad this year. To Dr Higgins, *Entomologist*, Vol. LXIII, we owe the first comprehensive account of this interesting locality. He spent, however, only two days here, but nevertheless took 71 species at the beginning and end of July.

One must also refer to a one day visit by the late Rev. E. Ashby in July 1933, *E.R.*, Vol. XLVI, page 106.

SESTRIERES has greatly altered in the last ten years, as it has been "discovered" as a winter sports resort. Three hotels have been built and a fourth tower-shaped building of 800 rooms is in course of erection, but in summer it is almost deserted. Entomologists must also regret the curtailment and draining of the peat bog for the sake of golf links, but there is plenty of good collecting ground left.

Above and to the south of the golf links is a plateau running from east to west, fringed with fir trees. The ground rising abruptly and culminating in Monte Alpette, 7470 ft., and Monte Sises, 8500 ft., both easily reached by cable ways. There is another cable way to Monte Banchetta, 8530 ft.; on the only occasion I made an ascent it was a cold and wet morning with few flowers and poor vegetation with little indication of insect life.

Very different was the scene on leaving the aerial car on M. Alpette; here was a natural basin formed amongst the hills with literally a mass of flowers of every conceivable hue on a background of vivid green. A walk of about three miles brought us back over steep undulating ground to the western end of the peat bog.

Colias phicomone race *pulverulenta*, Verity, was just emerging in numbers, as I saw some *in cōp*, and it was interesting to note, as Wheeler does in *Butterflies of Switzerland*, that at this height, 7500 ft., *C. phicomone* flies at a greater elevation than *C. palaeno*, and also

descends to a lower level than the latter—in fact *C. palaeno* was found at 6500 ft. The males were very difficult to catch but I was fortunate in finding one white and one yellow female.

Colias croceus had evidently not yet emerged, and only one *Aporia crataegi* was netted, probably its emergence was over.

On a hillside near the "Hotel Principi di Piemonte" and nowhere else I found a colony of *Thymelicus lineola*, small and closely allied to *T. ludoviciae*, but without the typical black markings of that species. I am inclined to think that this has never been described and may be a sub-species of *lineola* (size 22 mm.).

My son here netted a well-marked specimen of *Vanessa urticae*, to which Dr Verity has given the name of *opima*.

Dr Higgins discovered here *Erebia aethiopellus*, Hoffmsg., in numbers, and I naturally hoped to do the same but was only rewarded by four specimens in two years.

Dr Higgins gave an excellent description of this species in the paper mentioned above. He separates *E. aethiopellus* from *E. gorgophone*, Bell., the Barcellonette form; suffice here to say that *aethiopellus* is sprinkled with white atoms over the under surface of the hind-wings. Sestrières is probably the most northerly locality (Warren).

Other *Erebiae* taken were:—*E. melampus*; *E. neoridas*; *E. euryale*; *E. epiphron*, race *cydamus*, and *E. tyndarus*, race *subcassioides*, Verity.

Chrysophanus virgaureae, race *delicata*, Higgins, was common in 1934, but completely absent in 1937. In size the male is 34 mm. in expansion compared with 31 mm. for the Zermatt race and 38 mm. for the Valdieri one.

C. hippothoë was also absent this year. *B. pales*, subsp. *palustris*, abundant in 1934, but only just emerging in 1937.

Plebejus aegon, a small race, and one very blue female of *P. escheri*, ssp. *subappennina*, Turati, were captured.

Parnassius phoebus (*delius*) and *P. apollo* were also in evidence.

Mr Ashby gave a list of captures in *E.R.*, XLVI, so I will not give another list but will only note that he did not mention—*A. crataegi*, *V. urticae*, *L. coridon* or *E. aethiopellus*.

CLAVIERES, 5801 ft. This district can be reached easily in a 'bus from Sestrières in about one hour, so we paid it a hurried visit. I was much impressed by the possibilities of the terrain. There seem to be two routes to follow, either along the edge of the river towards the golf links, which Mr Ashby described and gave a list of captures, *E.R.*, XLVI—or else to cross the river and walk up the hillside through a forest. This latter route we followed. Insects which had not emerged at Sestrières were beginning to do so here, such as *C. virgaureae* and *Melitaea dictynna*. A few more of the small *lineola* skippers were found imbibing moisture and two females of *E. tyndarus*, ssp. *subcassioides* with pale grey undersides, one 44 mm., a large specimen; they look different from the other more numerous ones but Mr Warren refers them to the same subspecies. *Erebia goante* and *E. euryale* were also emerging.

Cameras are "verboten" in these places as one is quite close to the frontier, in fact we had a few words with two gendarmes, but the inspection of our *Erebias* removed their doubts.

On 31st July we left Sestrières for the Baths of Valdieri.

THE BATHS OF VALDIERI. The Baths of Valdieri, 4425 ft., are reached from Cuneo by motor 'bus; the journey taking 1½ hours. They are situated in the Alpes Maritimes in a rocky defile through which flows the river Gesso. The "Hydro," which is a large and commodious building, is almost the only habitation to be seen. There is no attempt at cultivation, as the land is precipitous and covered with boulders, neither are there sheep or goats to devour the herbage. I only discovered Valdieri by chance from perusing Baedeker, as it seemed the next most likely locality after being prevented from stopping at Certosa di Pesio, where Norris in 1892 (vide *Entomologist*, Vol. xxv) made his headquarters for the summer. Only later did the scattered articles by Dr Verity in the *Entomologist's Record* come to my notice. Mr H. Ashby also paid it a visit in 1931.

The aspect of the country is wild and precipitous with rough paths—especially towards the French frontier, where St Martin Vésubie could be reached in about five hours on foot.

Towards the South a rough military road with hairpin bends leads to Vallaseo, height over 5000 ft., where there is an extensive peat bog surrounded by mountains. Here I found females of *Erebia tyndarus* flying, with much larger ocelli than usual on the front wing belonging to the race *subcassioides*, Verity.

On the peat bog was also flying *E. epiphron* race *cydamus*, Frust., some expanding to 42 mm., and on the hills above, *E. alberganus* (*E. ceto*), with *E. euryale* and a few *E. ligea*. On leaving the peat bog, which was surprisingly very unproductive, we came across an *Erebia* flitting from rock to rock and which gave considerable trouble to capture; it turned out to be *E. goante*.

About a mile from the "Hydro" we found *C. virgaureae*, a large race in good numbers, the males expanding to 38 mm. The females were a much finer race than the Swiss one.

C. alciphron r. *ultra-gordius*, Verity was in evidence, one being a very melanic specimen.

P. apollo was in fair numbers, but does not seem to differ from the Swiss race.

I again found more specimens of *lineola* of a small size, 24 mm., scattered about, but not abundant.

Around the sulphur springs, which seemed an attraction to many insects, were many *Pieris napi* ab. *napaeae*, a large form, some expanding to 58 mm., with the undersides of the lower wings a light primrose hue with very poor black striations.

The following, which were common in 1933, were this year almost absent, viz.:—*Brenthis daphne*, *Satyrus cordula* and *Argynnis paphia*. Not a single *Syntomis phegea* was apparent, and the "Hydro" corridor, which in 1933 was full of moths resting on the walls, was this year devoid of any.

The Hesperids, *alveus*, *alcaeae*, *carthami* and *cacaliae* were met with.

I append a list of the species not mentioned above, making in all 60 species caught or observed during the two years.

H. althaeae, Hb.; *P. sylvanus*, Esp.; *P. comma*, L.; *C. dorilis*, Hufn.; *C. minima*, Sch.; *P. donzelii*, Bsd.; *P. damon*, Schiff.; *P.*

icarus, Hb.; *P. eros*, Ochs.; *P. machaon*, L.; *P. brassicae*, L.; *P. rapae*, L.; *P. daplidice*, L.; *L. sinapis*, L.; *C. hyale*, L.; *A. aglaia*, L.; *A. niobe*, L.; *I. lathonia*, L.; *B. amathusia*, Esp.; *M. athalia*, Rott.; *P. cardui*, L.; *P. atalanta*, L.; *E. antiopa*, L.; *V. io*, L.; *P. c-album*, L.; *L. rivularis (camilla)*, Schiff.; *P. maera*, L.; *E. jurtina*, L.; *E. lycaon*, Rott.; *C. iphis*, Schiff.; *C. arcania*, L.; *C. pamphilus*, L.; *E. pharte*, Hb.; *E. meolans*, de Prunner (*stygne*, Ochs.); *M. galathea*, var. *procida*, Hbst.; *G. rhamni*, L.

ECTOBIUS LIVIDUS, FABR. IN NORFOLK.

By K. H. CHAPMAN, B.A., F.R.E.S.

A male nymph apparently belonging to this species was sent to the British Museum by Mr E. A. Ellis, Hon. Assistant Secretary of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, on 31st January 1938. Mr Ellis stated that it was captured by Capt. M. J. D. Cockle, on a marsh at "Wheatfen," Norfolk, on 21st December 1937, and that he could not identify it from Lucas' or Burr's works on British Orthoptera. The specimen thus came into my hands.

It was obviously an *Ectobius* nymph, and equally obviously not *E. panzeri*, Steph., and I at first thought it was *E. lividus*, Fabr. This made the record interesting at once, because Burr (*British Grasshoppers and their Allies*, 1936, pp. 44-45) says "Neither *E. lapponicus* nor *E. lividus* have been recorded, so far as I know, north of the Thames," and presumably the specimen taken by Capt. Cockle belonged to one of these two species, since it was too large to be *E. panzeri*, Steph., the only other British species. Unfortunately, we have in the British Museum only one nymph of *E. lividus*, Fabr., from Guernsey, and comparison of the Norfolk specimen with this and with nymphs of *E. lapponicus*, L., did not seem to help very much, because in all our nymph material of both species, there are numerous dark reddish spots on the dorsal surface of the thorax, more so than in the Norfolk specimen, and at the same time the latter has well defined *median* dark markings on the thorax above, which are not present in any of our nymphs, and further dark markings on the sides of the dorsal surface of the abdomen, which, so far as the British Museum material is concerned, are only present on one nymph of *E. panzeri*, Steph. Dr Blair tells me that he also has never seen a nymph of any of the British species of *Ectobius* with similar median markings on the thorax.

On the whole, however, I was inclined to think that the specimen was a nymph of *E. lividus* as I had thought at first. I asked Dr Hanitsch's opinion, and he replied "I see no reason why this cockroach should not be the nymph of *Ectobius lividus*, Fabr., ♂, though it is certainly not 'entirely fulvous above and beneath' as Malcolm Burr says (*Brit. Grasshoppers*, etc., p. 42). Besides Shelford's extensive collection, we have Lucas's here (Oxford), about 50 examples of each of the three British species, and quite a number of the *lividus*, especially also of the nymphs, have the disk of the pronotum speckled like the present specimen. The occurrence so far north is most remarkable. All our material here is from the South of England and the Continent."